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SUBJECT: UNHCR-MOZAMBIQUE FOCUSES ON LOCAL INTEGRATION,
SELF RELIANCE

¶1. (U) Poloff met recently with head of the UNHCR mission in Mozambique, Victoria Akyeampong to discuss the first-of-its-kind UNHCR pilot transition program for operations at the Maratane refugee camp in Nampula Province. Akyeampong described the 2006-2008 UNHCR country plan which focuses on providing refugees at Maratane with resources to become self reliant and more integrated into society. The GRM is working closely with UNHCR on the transition, which is expected to be completed by 2010. If successful, the program could serve as a model for future UNHCR operations in other countries with significant refugee populations.

¶2. (U) For the past several years, the refugee population at the Maratane camp has held steady with approximately 4,000 refugees, mostly from the Great Lakes countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Rwanda. Despite the UNHCR's best efforts to return refugees to their home countries or find third countries for them to live in, applications for refugee status, particularly from the DRC, stymied the reduction in the number of refugees living at the camp. The 2006-2008 UNHCR-GRM pilot agreement (which recently was extended to 2010) would check the continuing influx of refugees by cutting financial and food donations and instead focus on self-sustainability programs, like growing fruits and vegetables and animal husbandry. As part of the program, UNHCR established micro credit loan programs for the purchasing of resources.

¶3. (U) According to Akyeampong, the GRM is playing a vital role in the transition, particularly in the area of local integration. The GRM is coordinating its role through several ministries: for example, the Ministry of Education will ensure that refugee students are able to attend accredited local schools, and the Ministry of Health will ensure that refugees are able to receive health care at local medical facilities. Financial assistance to refugees, previously handled through the UNHCR will now be provided through the GRM Refugee Institute (INAR) as a means of building INAR's capacity. In addition, the assistance provided to refugees will no longer be provided "to the camp," but will be part of an overall assistance program to the Mozambican population living in the area around the camp. Once refugees have attained self-sustainability, they will have freedom of movement, may acquire property, and decide where in Mozambique they wish to live (with the exception of Maputo).

¶4. (U) Akyeampong related that the plan is already well underway and that she expects to see a significant reduction in the number of refugees in Mozambique within six months. Due to better investigating and reporting capacities regarding the living conditions in the home countries of the refugees, many applications for refugee status are now being rejected. Another mechanism that should greatly lower the number of applications received involves the reduction in food rations by 50 percent in July, and by January 1, 2009

only vulnerable refugees and their families will receive such donations.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Akyeampong was highly optimistic that the transition was going smoothly and ultimately would be successful. It is notable that the UNHCR recognized that fraudulent applications by mostly DRC citizens was keeping the camp population artificially high and leaving the potential for a quasi-permanent camp. While the GRM appears to be taking an active role in the transition, there are questions regarding the capacity of INAR as well as certain potential for corruption in the distribution of financial assistance through INAR. International NGOs World Vision and World Relief have been operating projects promoting self-reliance and local integration for the past several years and report that their programs largely have been successful. (Note: Both NGOs are wrapping up these programs as part of the transition, meaning Mozambique will likely not have any submissions for Taft Fund projects. End note). The GRM has every incentive to ensure a smooth transition: as the first-of-its kind pilot country to attempt such a shift in operations, Mozambique could serve as a model to other countries with sizeable refugee populations.

Chapman